

*But a local business leader hosting the Irvine event defends the state's plans.*

Rep. Kevin McCarthy, the third-ranking House Republican, came to town for lunch at Costa Mesa's Center Club last Monday and didn't hesitate to trash the same high-speed rail plan supported by his lunch host.

The majority whip from Bakersfield addressed the Orange County Business Council and the OC Forum after an introduction by **Rep. John Campbell**, who explained how McCarthy rose so quickly in his three terms.

**"He knows everybody," said Campbell, R-Irvine "And their spouse. And their kids. He asks me about my kids and then he tells me what they're doing."**

Also, McCarthy rarely pulls punches - as evidenced by his attack on California's high-speed rail, which is endorsed by business council President Lucy Dunn.

"It's not the right time or the right approach," McCarthy said, expressing particular concern about there being just \$8 billion available at the moment for a project that will cost at least \$68 billion. "I want a new house but I can't afford one. So do I go buy a front door?"

After lunch, I asked Dunn about McCarthy's comments.

"Having every dollar in the bank before you begin – that's not how infrastructure gets built," said the Republican, who served as director of the state Department of Housing and Community Development under Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. "I really admire Kevin McCarthy... but I'm much more realistic about infrastructure getting built and not so political."

I then sat down with McCarthy and read him Dunn's comments. He argued that unlike the

high-speed rail plan, highways and airports have ongoing funding sources to cover their costs, including gas taxes and flight surcharges.

"If you're going to build a road, you pay a gasoline tax," he said. "If you're going to build an airport, you pay taxes on tickets. High-speed rail will not pay for itself – it needs subsidies."

McCarthy didn't mention local transportation measures, like Orange County's voter-approved Measure M half-cent sales tax. Measure M raised \$4 billion in its first 20 years, could raise \$15 billion over the next 30 years, and is a key source of funding for freeway improvements and other transportation projects. In 2008, state voters approved spending \$10 billion on high-speed rail – a small piece of the ultimate cost.)